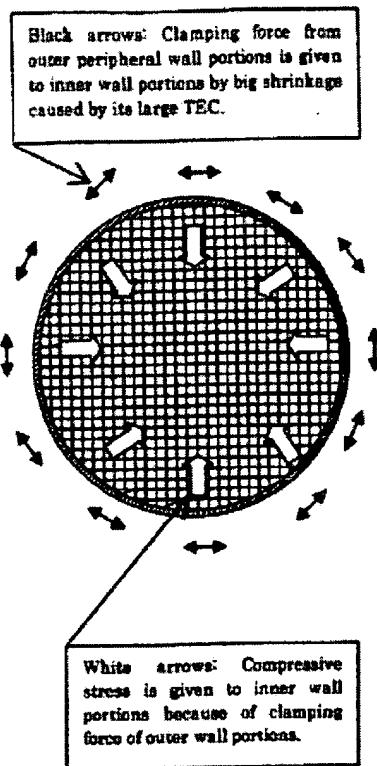


3. Claims 1-2, 4-6 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Kotani U.S. Patent 5,629,067. The Office Action alleges that the "outer" is the same as "inner," and that the raw material is on the inside.

Applicant discovered, *inter alia*, a ceramic honeycomb structure comprising a first circumferential wall, a plurality of through-holes surrounded by partition walls, and a second, outer circumferential wall obtained by firing a layer of a raw material applied to the first circumferential wall of the ceramic honeycomb structure (see amended claim 1). The thermal expansion coefficient of the second, outer circumferential wall is larger than a thermal expansion coefficient of the first circumferential wall, for applying compressive force in a direction of a diameter of the honeycomb structure to an inside partition wall (see amended claim 1). A larger thermal expansion coefficient (TEC) provides a compressive stress to the inner wall portions (see attached Explanation in Support of Patentability).



Note: TEC = thermal expansion coefficient

Kotani describes a structure including a honeycomb body and an outer coating having a “same degree of thermal expansion” (see col. 7, lines 15-16), or a “lower thermal expansion of the outer coating...for effectively preventing cracks and other defects in the outer coating” (see col. 7, lines 27-28).

Kotani does not describe a first and second circumferential wall, let alone a second, outer circumferential wall having a higher thermal expansion coefficient than the first circumferential wall, which results in applying a compressive force to an inside partition wall. Indeed, the lower thermal expansion of Kotani’s outer coating appears to be diametrically opposite to the desired expansion in Applicant’s claimed invention. For at least these reasons, Kotani does not disclose